

# CAREC RAILWAY WORKING GROUP



NEWSLETTER  
DECEMBER 2020



CAREC Railway Working Group Meeting  
12–13 December 2019, Bangkok

## INTRODUCTION

On 16 and 17 March 2020, the sixth meeting of the CAREC Railway Working Group (RWG) was planned to take place in Istanbul, Turkey. This meeting would have reported on progress with the ongoing technical assistance (TA) project financed by Asian Development Bank (ADB).<sup>1</sup> The TA is supporting CAREC member countries in implementation of the CAREC Railway Strategy 2030,<sup>2</sup> with a view to identifying opportunities for investment in CAREC railways and sharing best practices for railway commercialization and reform (e.g. rail freight sales and marketing function, track capacity and timetabling software) that could be drawn upon by CAREC railways.

Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that is still impacting us globally, the sixth RWG meeting had to be cancelled. Further in-person meetings are expected to resume once the COVID-19 situation has improved and travel restrictions are eased.

Through this newsletter, ADB would like to update RWG members on the progress made in TA activities agreed at earlier meetings, and to reaffirm its intentions to continue a fruitful collaboration in the years to come.

## PROGRESS OF TA ACTIVITIES IN 2020

### CAREC Transportation Model

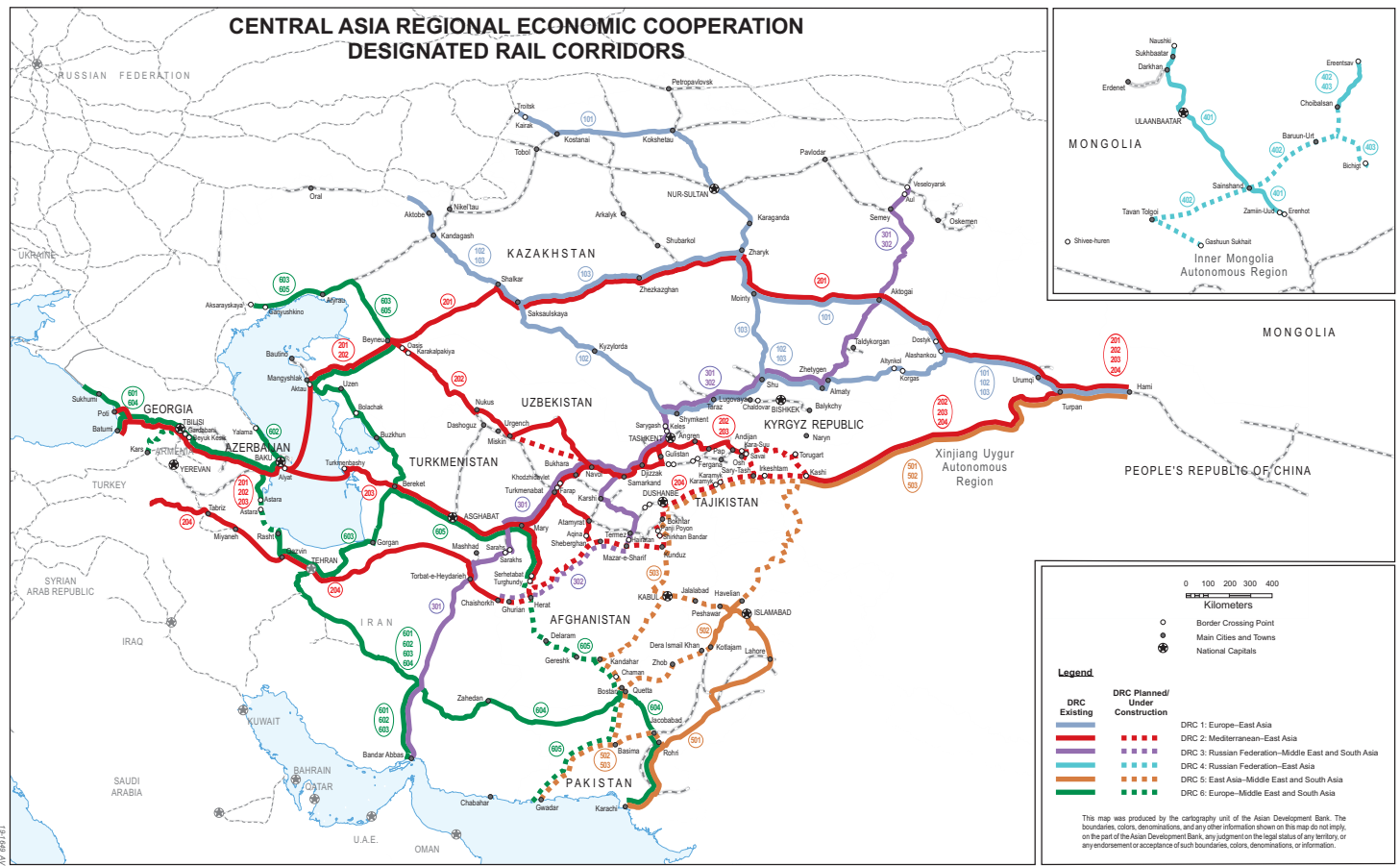
One of the first tasks undertaken under the TA was the development of a CAREC transportation model, to obtain insight in the competitiveness and potential of CAREC rail corridors. To date, the model is fully developed and ready to be used for (pre-)feasibility studies and other traffic analyses. The model estimates cargo and person trips by mode on specific routes or links.

During TA implementation, the RWG will have to decide on the custody and continued updating of the model to secure its availability in the future.

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, ADB mobilized a technical assistance (TA) project with the generous financial support of the People's Republic of China Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund (PRCF), and the United Kingdom Fund for Asia Regional Trade and Connectivity (ARTCF).

<sup>2</sup> *Unlocking the Potential of Railways: A Railway Strategy for CAREC, 2017–2030* (the Strategy) has been developed by CAREC member countries to serve as a guiding document for the sound, long-term development of CAREC railways. The Strategy is intended to equip the region's railways to better capture evolving trade flows and contribute to regional economic development. The Strategy was endorsed at the 15th CAREC Ministerial Conference in Islamabad in October 2016.





## Publications

### Track capacity and timetabling software

As agreed at the fifth CAREC RWG meeting in Bangkok on 12 and 13 December 2019, the TA would deliver an explanatory note on the use of railway capacity software. On 1 May 2020, a report on track capacity and timetabling software was published at the CAREC website.<sup>3</sup> This publication was due to be shared with RWG members at the sixth RWG meeting in March that was postponed, in combination with a dedicated session on functions and practical use of track capacity and timetable software, including demonstrations. This initiative will be followed up at the next plenary meeting of the RWG.



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## TRACK CAPACITY AND TIMETABLE SOFTWARE

### Publication Details

- Publisher**  
CAREC
- Date Published**  
May 1, 2020
- Countries**  
Regional
- Sectors**  
Transport



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=track-capacity-timetable-software>.



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### ***Country rail sector assessments***

During 2020, work on the country rail sector assessments (RSAs) continued. The RSA reports describe the railway network, organization, trends in traffic, market competitiveness, operational and financial performance, and proposals for investment and reform for each member country. After an intensive process of information collection, country consultations, site visits and surveys, all eleven country reports have been completed and will be published on the CAREC website as from 29 January

2021 (English version) and mid-March 2021 (Russian version).<sup>4</sup>

These RSA reports provide a comprehensive picture of the opportunities, challenges and obstacles for railways in Central Asia. The series of country reports will be complemented with an overarching report, summarizing

<sup>4</sup> You may send an email to [kvila@adb.org](mailto:kvila@adb.org), indicating 'Reminder RSA reports' as subject, and you will receive the download link once the documents have been uploaded.

## 11 COUNTRY REPORTS



main findings and recommendations for CAREC railway sector development. This report is expected to be finalized in June 2021 and will be made available on the CAREC website.

### Studies

At the fifth CAREC RWG meeting, the RWG also selected several consulting studies to be carried out under the TA, notably (i) a traffic study for the PRC–Kyrgyz Republic–Uzbekistan railway project, (ii) a CAREC rolling stock needs and financing facility study, and (iii) advisory support for preparation of railway commercialization, reform and investment programs in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.

As regards the PRC–Kyrgyz Republic–Uzbekistan traffic study, consultants were recruited in May 2020. The team prepared an inception report outlining the work plan and expected outputs of the study. Due to travel restrictions the study had to be put on hold. Activities will restart once travel to respective countries is possible again for the necessary consultations.

For the rolling stock study, the TA team has shared a questionnaire with member countries to assess current rolling stock availability, characteristics, and future needs. This type of data collection is needed as an input for finalizing well-informed terms of reference for the study. This activity is

currently on hold, with study objectives to be discussed in more detail at the next plenary meeting. Countries that have yet to submit their questionnaire are kindly requested to do so at their earliest convenience.

For the advisory support to Tajik and Kyrgyz railways, recruitment of experts was completed in May 2020, but activities had to be put on hold due to travel restrictions. The assignment will be followed up once travel becomes possible again.

Furthermore, the TA is to support member countries by sharing best practices in establishing and operating a railway sales and marketing function. A dedicated session on this subject will be included in the agenda for the next RWG meeting or held as an online workshop, together with a presentation sharing experience in the development of rail corridor services.

## NEXT STEPS

While the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed implementation of some activities of the technical assistance project and required postponement of the CAREC RWG meetings, there are reasons for optimism.

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High-speed train travel  
Tashkent-Samarkand,  
22 April 2019



First, the railway has proven to be an important mode of transport for carrying the long-distance international freight of the CAREC region during the COVID-19 crisis. Since railway requires fewer human interactions than truck transport, and railway tariffs are more competitive than air freight tariffs, railway has been the mode of choice for many shippers and forwarders during the COVID-19 crisis. Some countries have been able to increase rail freight volumes despite a decrease in trade volumes for many commodities. For the railway sector, the crisis may have provided impetus to improve the efficiency of international railway transport routes that traverse the CAREC region.

Technical assistance activities are continuing as far as current conditions enable the team to continue the work. However, face-to-face contacts are of vital importance for many tasks including the meetings of the CAREC RWG. Once international travel becomes possible again, the CAREC secretariat will resume where it stopped early March by arranging the sixth RWG meeting. Meanwhile, options are being considered for holding a possible virtual RWG workshop in the first quarter of 2021.

Let's hope for swift and effective worldwide action to eliminate COVID-19 in 2021 that will allow us to meet in person again, strengthening our common efforts to further develop the railway sector in Central Asia.

You are kindly invited to share this newsletter with colleagues with an involvement in any of the TA activities or a general interest in CAREC railway related matters.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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The CAREC Program is a committed partnership of 11 countries and development partners,  
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